

sermon outline 1

rejoice always?

philippians 4:4

Note: It is recommended that you read chapters 1–4 in *Anxious for Nothing* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. Introduction

- A. We might wonder if the apostle Paul was out of touch with reality when he wrote “rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4 NIV). “Rejoice most of the time” would have been a sufficient challenge . . . or at least “rejoice when things are going well in your life.”
- B. In Philippians 4:6, Paul adds, “Be anxious for nothing” (NKJV). Does God really intend to say that we cannot *ever* be anxious?
 - 1. Actually, it’s the life of *perpetual anxiety* that Paul is addressing in Philippians 4:6. Another way to read the verse would be, “Don’t let anything in life leave you perpetually breathless and in angst.”
 - 2. The *presence* of anxiety is unavoidable . . . but the *prison* of anxiety is optional.

II. Teaching

- A. Jesus said that in this life we will face troubles (see John 16:33)—and troubles produce anxiety.
 - 1. Anxiety and stress cause many problems for us.
 - a. The United States currently spends \$300 billion each year on stress-related issues and illnesses.
 - b. Anxiety is an emotion and not a sin, yet it may lead to sin. Jesus warned, “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness and the anxieties of life” (Luke 21:34 NIV).
 - c. Anxiety spikes when we seek to be in control of our own lives. We have to relinquish the control and surrender to Jesus to find life (see Mark 8:35).

2. The Hawaiian word for anxiety is *haole*, and it means “no breath.” When white settlers first came to Hawaii, they hurried around building things and organizing things. The native Hawaiians thought the settlers seemed perpetually out of breath.
 3. The Latin word behind anxiety means “to choke” or “to squeeze.”
 - a. What is choking your life, squeezing you tight? How are you trying to be in control?
 - b. Imagine the peace you might receive if you relinquished your life to God. What might that look like?
 - c. What is keeping you from making that decision?
- B. To “rejoice in the Lord” means to trust in God’s control and in his sovereignty. “[Our God] works out everything in conformity to the purpose of his will” (Ephesians 1:11 NIV).
1. Not all things are good, but God works all things “for the good of those who love him” (Romans 8:28 NIV).
 - a. God’s purposes cannot fail (see Proverbs 21:30).
 - b. God’s purposes cannot be diverted by anyone or anything (see Daniel 4:35).
 - c. God’s power sustains the whole universe (see Hebrews 1:3).
 2. We have to “stabilize our soul with the sovereignty of God.”
 - a. In Isaiah 6, we read that when King Uzziah died, Isaiah thought all was lost for his nation (see verses 1–3).
 - b. But God assured Isaiah that his divine purposes were not dependent on a human king (see verses 4–10).
 - c. God reassured Isaiah that while the throne of Israel was empty, his throne was occupied. God calmed Isaiah’s fears not by removing the problem but by revealing his presence to him.
- C. We can be C.A.L.M. when we understand that God is always in control. As Isaiah wrote, “You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3 NKJV). We remain C.A.L.M. by:
1. **C**elebrating God’s goodness (see Philippians 4:4)
 2. **A**sking God for help (see Philippians 4:6)
 3. **L**eaving our concerns with God (see Philippians 4:6)
 4. **M**editating on good things (see Philippians 4:8)

III. Application

- A. In this moment of quiet reflection, what anxieties and worries are surfacing in your heart? What is keeping you from relinquishing them to God and trusting in his loving control over your life?
- B. Here is a simple prayer you can pray when anxiety comes: *“Dear Lord, you spoke to storms. Would you speak to me? You calmed the hearts of the apostles. Would you calm the chaos within me? You told them to fear not. Say the same to me. I am weary from my worry, battered and belittled by the gales of life. Oh, Prince of Peace, give me a spirit of calm. Quench anxiety. Stir courage. Let me know fewer frets and more faith. In Jesus’ name, amen.”*

sermon outline 2

contagious calm

philippians 4:5–6

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 5 in *Anxious for Nothing* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. Introduction

- A. Back in 1962, a person you have likely never heard of quite possibly saved the world from entering into a third World War.
- B. Vasili Arkhipov was an officer on a Soviet submarine that was part of a fleet of subs sent on a clandestine mission off the coast of Florida and Cuba. The sailors on board were agitated because of the high temperatures in the sub as well as by the high danger of their mission.
- C. At one point, a patrol of American warships detected the subs off the Florida coast and dropped depth charges. The captain on Arkhipov's submarine wanted to blast the Americans into oblivion, which would have certainly sparked World War III. But Vasili kept calm and privately talked his frantic captain into surfacing and talking with the Americans. A cataclysmic war was thus defused.
- D. Contagious calm in the presence of high anxiety can eternally change lives and the course of events. As the apostle Paul writes, we need to let our "gentleness be evident to all . . . the Lord is near" (Philippians 4:5 NIV).

II. Teaching

- A. To make our gentleness evident requires trusting in the One who is with us.
 - 1. The Greek word for gentleness (*epieikes*) means a seasoned and mature temperament.
 - a. The apostle Paul has in mind a person who is level-headed, even-handed, and fair-minded in the face of trials and pressures.
 - b. This gentleness is to be evident to all, including family members, co-workers, church friends, neighbors—all the people in our lives.

2. When we become frantic with worry or anxiety, outbursts of anger are not far away. We can unleash destructive attitudes and words on those we love the most.
 - a. Is our gentleness—our contagious calm—evident to our spouse, our children, and our other family members?
 - b. It doesn't do any good for us to be calm when everything is going well. We also need to exhibit a tempered, level-headed response in times of pressure, conflict, and even panic.
 - i) On a scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being "no gentleness" to 10 being "gentleness evident to *all*," how would you rate your contagious calm?
 - ii) What is one step you can take to mature in this quality?
- B. To make our gentleness evident to all requires understanding that the Lord himself is always with us.
1. The phrases in Philippians 4:5 need to be read together, for they are connected: "Let your gentleness be evident to all [for] *the Lord is near.*"
 - a. The Bible reveals the Lord was always present with his people:
 - i) He was with Abram (see Genesis 15:1).
 - ii) He was with Hagar (see Genesis 21:17).
 - iii) He was with Isaac (see Genesis 26:24).
 - iv) He was with Joshua (Joshua 1:9).
 - v) He was with the Psalmist (see Psalm 118:6–7).
 - b. Jesus' name (Immanuel) means "God with us" (Matthew 1:23 NIV).
 - c. At the end of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus promised, "Surely I am *with you always*, to the very end of the age" (Matthew 28:20 NIV).
 2. Jesus' disciples once faced an anxiety-producing challenge: feeding 5,000-plus hungry people. The event is recorded in each of the Gospels (see Matthew 14:13–21; Mark 6:31–44; Luke 9:12–17; John 6:1–14).
 - a. When Jesus instructed the disciples to give the people something to eat, they replied, "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish" (Matthew 14:17 NIV).
 - b. The disciples forgot to add Jesus in the tally. Even after seeing him perform many miracles, they acted as if he were not there.

- c. Often, the Lord allows trials to remind us to trust in him—the One who is near, at hand, and will make a way through the trial.

III. Application

- A. Because Vasili Arkhipov reacted to his panicky captain with calmness and gentleness, a potential world war was thwarted. The way you respond to a crisis is important.
- B. Remember that the Lord is near to you and with you. Your gentleness can be evident to all as you trust in God—regardless of the situation. Even from the agony of the cross, Jesus gently gave direction to his disciple John to care for his mother (see John 19:26–27).
- C. What hinders you from crying out to God for help? Pride? Self-sufficiency? Fear? As the psalmist encourages, “The LORD is with me; I will not be afraid. . . . The LORD is with me; he is my helper” (Psalm 118:6–7 NIV). Call out to the One who deeply loves you and longs to help you.

sermon outline 3

prayer, not despair

philippians 4:6

Note: It is recommended that you read chapters 6–7 in *Anxious for Nothing* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. Introduction

- A. Our search for what we think we want in life can be compared to standing on the banks of a wide river called “If Only.” We gaze longingly across its waters until our eyes rest on the far shore where we believe our dreams lie.
- B. Have you ever found yourself standing on its banks? Have you ever found yourself sayings things such as . . .
 - 1. *If only* I were thinner . . . then I would be happy.
 - 2. *If only* I were richer . . . then I would be happy.
 - 3. *If only* I could get married . . . then I would be happy.
 - 4. *If only* I possessed that one thing . . . then I would be happy.
- C. Maybe you’ve convinced yourself that the If Only river is separating you from the good life. If so, you’ve located a source of anxiety, because the quest to somehow cross that river is costly.
 - 1. Perhaps you work longer hours in an attempt to reach that far shore.
 - 2. Maybe you borrow more money in an attempt to achieve your goal.
 - 3. Or you might pile on more responsibilities out the misguided belief that if you can just work hard and long enough, you can cross the If Only river.
- D. The truth is that the good life begins not when our circumstances change but when our attitude toward them does. This begins with recognizing the gifts that God has provided and then filling our hearts with gratitude for those blessings. It begins by recognizing our need to turn to God in prayer, not despair.

II. Teaching

- A. There is power in specific prayer.

1. Paul uses three different words for prayer in Philippians 4:6:
 - a. *Prayer*, a general word that covers all we ask God.
 - b. *Petition*, or supplication, which speaks of humility in prayer.
 - c. *Requests*, the specific items we ask of God.
 2. One simple illustration of a specific *request* is found in Matthew 14:25–31, where Peter, walking to Jesus on the stormy sea, cried out, “Lord, save me!” (verse 30).
 3. Jesus often responded to specific requests:
 - a. In Luke 18:35–43, he responded to the specific request from a blind man to receive healing (see verse 41).
 - b. In John 2:1–12, when the family at the wedding in Cana ran out of wine, Jesus responded to a specific request from his mother to address the problem (see verses 3–4).
 - c. In Matthew 15:21–28, Jesus answered a specific request from a Canaanite woman to heal her daughter (see verse 22).
 4. There are three compelling reasons to pray specific prayers:
 - a. Specific prayers are serious prayers.
 - b. Specific prayers are opportunities to see God’s work (see Genesis 24:12–14).
 - c. Specific prayers create a lighter load (see 1 Peter 5:7).
 5. Specific prayer demonstrates our trust in a loving and good God. It reveals that we believe nothing is too trivial or too challenging to bring to him. Even if we cry out as Peter did, “Lord, save me!” God will hear and respond to us.
- B. We need to express gratitude in prayer.
1. In Philippians 4:6, Paul states that we should present our requests to God “with thanksgiving.” Gratitude is the mindful awareness of the benefits that we have been given in life.
 2. Many people live with *contingent* contentment—“I’d be happy if only I had so-and-so.” But Paul had learned the secret of *certain* contentment. In Philippians 4:11–13, he states that *Christ is enough*. (Paul mentions Christ forty times in the 104 verses in Philippians.)
 3. Paul understood—as we must—that what we have in Christ is greater than anything we will ever have in the world.

III. Application

- A. The level of the Miami River in Miami, Florida, rises and falls with the tide. If you are on a houseboat along the bank, you will feel the boat rock back and forth as the currents from the tide and the river traffic create waves.
- B. However, even though river levels change and the boat rocks, the houseboat itself will not drift. Why? Because it is securely anchored.
- C. What about you? To whom or what is your life anchored? What is keeping you from surrendering to God and being anchored in God's love, power, and wisdom? Today is the day to discover that "Christ is enough."

sermon outline 4

god's peace, your peace

philippians 4:7

Note: It is recommended that you read chapter 8 in *Anxious for Nothing* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. Introduction

- A. In October 1991, the “perfect storm” (also called “the no-name storm”) raged along the Atlantic coast from Canada to Puerto Rico. Damage from the storm totaled more than \$200 million and killed thirteen people. That historic event prompted a Hollywood movie called *The Perfect Storm*, which told about the tragic end of the vessel *Andrea Gail* and its crew.
- B. All of us experience “perfect storms” of different kinds—one bad event, *plus* another, *plus* another catastrophe on top of that. Unexpected trials can erupt one after another in our lives. Is it possible to experience unexplainable peace during such storms of life? Today, we will consider that *God's* peace can become *our* peace even in midst of the “perfect storm.”

II. Teaching

- A. God's peace is a gift to us in times of stormy anxiety.
 - 1. The peace God gives is God's own peace. In Philippians 4:7, Paul writes “the peace *of* God,” not “the peace *from* God.” In John 14:27, Jesus says, “My peace I give to you” (NKJV).
 - 2. God is present in times of trouble and guards our hearts with his peace.
 - a. In Matthew 14:22–27, we read the story of how Jesus' disciples were caught in a dangerous storm—which caused them no small amount of anxiety.
 - b. Jesus had gone up on a mountainside to pray. When he saw the boat being tossed by the waves, he walked out across the water to them (see verses 22–24).

- c. The disciples thought Jesus was a ghost, but he told them to take courage because he was near (see verses 25–27). Jesus provided them with his supernatural peace in the midst of the storm.
 - d. Jesus does the same for us today in the midst of our storms.
 - 3. The peace of God is a *gift* from the Lord that transcends all logic or means to explain it. God provides this gift to us when we call out to him.
 - a. How do you respond to an onslaught of unexpected setbacks? With fear? Anger? Denial?
 - b. God invites you to cast *all* your anxieties on him (see 1 Peter 5:7). He invites you to pray, petition, and request his help. Trials and storms are opportunities to experience the explicable peace of God—Jesus’ own peace.
 - c. Storms often reveal our weakness, and these weaknesses are opportunities for us to experience God’s grace. When we are weak in our own strength, we are strong in God’s strength (see 2 Corinthians 12:9–10).
- B. God makes three promises to us when we face “perfect storms.”
 - 1. In Acts 27:1–26, we read how Paul was on a ship bound for Rome when the crew encountered a storm that lasted fourteen days.
 - a. Paul had previously warned the sailors not to sail, but the crew ignored him (see verses 9–11).
 - b. Before long a hurricane-force wind called the Northeaster began to batter the ship (see verses 14–15).
 - c. Just when the crew gave up all hope of being saved, an angel appeared to Paul and assured him that no lives would be lost (see verse 24).
 - 2. God’s words to Paul during this time reveal three promises we can cling to when the storms of life arise.
 - a. *Heaven has helpers to help us.* “Last night an angel . . . stood beside me” (verse 23 NIV). God sent an angel to reassure Paul in his time of need (see also Daniel 10:5–6; Hebrews 1:14.)
 - b. *Heaven has a place for us.* “The God to whom I belong” (verse 23 NIV). God takes responsibility for our lives.
 - c. *We are in the Lord’s service.* “The God . . . whom I serve” (verse 23 NIV). Our lives move according to God’s timetable. “Your eyes saw

my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be" (Psalm 139:16 NIV).

III. Application

- A. At the age of two, Noah Drew accidentally fell out of his family car, and his mother ran over his legs. After being rushed to the ER, it was discovered that Drew had scrapes and bruises but no broken bones—even though a five-ton car had just rolled over him.
- B. When Drew's mother put him to bed that night, he said, "Mama, Jesus caught me." The next day, he added, "Mama, Jesus has brown hands. He caught me like this." That night, he prayed, "Jesus, thank you for catching me."
- C. God still catches his children. He still provides his perfect peace to us in the midst of our perfect storms. So today, which of the three promises will you lean into? Will you chose to trust God and accept the peace he provides?

sermon outline 5

meditate on good things

philippians 4:8

Note: It is recommended that you read chapters 9–11 in *Anxious for Nothing* before the sermon so you will be acquainted with the stories and principles from Max Lucado.

I. Introduction

- A. Imagine your thoughts as being like the planes that circle an airport. They fly around, take off, and land. You are like the air traffic controller who directs all those plans. You get to choose what thoughts take off, land, circle, or just fly around in your mind. You get to pick what you ponder.
- B. As the author of Proverbs 4:23 advises, “Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it.” If we want to be happy tomorrow, we need to sow seeds of happiness today. Sowing seeds of misery today (assuming the worst, beating ourselves up, rehearsing our regrets) will only guarantee that we will be miserable and anxious tomorrow.
- C. The apostle Paul writes, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (Philippians 4:8). Today we will consider how healing from anxiety requires us to exhibit healthy thinking.

II. Teaching

- A. Satan likes to fill our minds with thoughts of fear and anxiety. As Jesus said, “The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy” (John 10:10 NIV).
 - 1. The spiritual battle takes place in the mind. This is why the apostle Paul urges us to “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5 NIV).
 - 2. Satan strategy is always to use lies—about God, about us, about life, or anything else that can hold us in bondage and fear. Jesus said, “When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44 NIV).

3. The Greek word translated as worry (*merimnate*) in the New Testament means “a divided mind.”
 - a. Worry takes a meat cleaver to our thoughts, energy, and focus. It chops up our attention and sends our awareness in a dozen directions. “Anxiety weighs down the heart” (Proverbs 12:25 NIV).
 - b. In Philippians 4:8, the Greek word translated as “think about” (*logizomai*) contains the idea of logic. Clear-headed, logical thinking is a vital weapon against worry and anxiety. It is important for us to wear the belt of truth (see Ephesians 6:14).
 4. Satan’s worry-producing thoughts are like termites in our homes, damaging us from the inside out. There are four things we can do to stand against this threat:
 - a. Identify the enemy’s thoughts as lies designed to rob us of God’s peace and joy.
 - b. Take those thoughts captive and bring them to Jesus. Arrest them on the spot!
 - c. Ask Jesus to dismiss those thoughts and fill us with his presence, peace, and hope.
 - d. Take charge of what we choose to think about.
- B. We must cling to Christ and not to a list of mental virtues.
1. Most of us do not live our lives based on a list of virtues.
 - a. Paul’s list in Philippians includes eight kinds of thoughts: *true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy*.
 - b. As Max confesses, “I have trouble remembering the eight virtues, much less remembering to filter my thoughts through them.”
 2. A simpler way to clean up our thinking is simply to *abide* in Christ.
 - a. In John 15:5, Jesus says, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (NKJV). We bear fruit—“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness” (Galatians 5:22 NASB)—as we remain connected to the Vine.
 - b. We all grow weary of unrest. We want to be done with sleepless nights and restless days. We long for the fruit of the Spirit and to be truly “anxious for nothing.” But how do we bear this fruit?

- c. The secret is not in *trying harder* but in *hanging tighter*. Our assignment is not fruitfulness but faithfulness. Fruit-bearing and anxiety-free living is less about doing and more about abiding.

III. Application

- A. Jesus's invitation is, "Come, live in me! Make my home your home." God is near, and he is with you. He promises that his supernatural peace will guard your heart and your mind. Your mind *can* be filled with God-glorifying, healthy thoughts. You are invited to do one thing: live with Jesus as Jesus lives with you.
- B. What is holding you back from accepting this invitation? What thoughts are dividing your mind? Today, you *can* stop living with perpetual worry and anxiety. You *can* lead a life in which you are anxious for nothing. It *can* be yours.